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TORONTO STAR

WEATHER HIGH 21 C | PARTLY SUNNY | MAP S8 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

Bee the North: Our mascot in push to save urban ecosystem



RICHARD LAUTENS TORONTO STAR

Bee researcher Clement Kent turned his backyard near College St. and Dovercourt Rd. into a haven for pollinators.

Toronto's move to protect the pollinators sheds light on the role cities can play in preserving biological diversity and fighting climate change



KATE ALLEN
 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY REPORTER

In April 2018, city council passed a motion that, ironically, generated almost no buzz: the declaration of Toronto's Official Bee.

The metallic green sweat bee — *Agapostemon virescens* is the species name — was chosen for three reasons. One, it's abundant: of the more than 360 wild bee species that inhabit Toronto, this one is fairly common. Two, it's hard to miss: it looks like it's all zhuzhed up to hit the bee version of Studio 54, or maybe the Brunswick House before it became a Rexall. And three, it lives in a condo.

Females of this species create communal nests



The metallic green sweat bee.

in the ground. The nest has a common entrance, but each bee gets its own unit. One female guards the entrance at a time, its iridescent head poking out of the burrow. Uncommonly for wild bees, which typically aggressively defend their nests, the guard bee lets other stranger bees, its neighbours, into the entrance. For its welcoming attitude — and its condo lifestyle — *Agapostemon virescens* was deemed worthy of Official Bee status.

CLIMATE continued on A12

In Canada's Far North, an environmental tug-of-war, B1

VOTE 2019

Parties make big promises. Can they pay for them?



Heather Scofield
 OPINION

One of the best things about the federal election campaign so far has been the parliamentary budget officer and his independent costing of election promises.

A rigorous accounting of the onslaught of political promises during an election campaign allows voters to understand not simply their benefits but also their costs.

That's why Yves Giroux has hired a pack of number crunchers who prepared for months in advance of the campaign and are now able to produce reliable, public details on how much each new policy commitment costs — in real time.

The week that was
 Nobody had what you'd call real momentum as campaign kicked off.

The exercise has removed a degree of cynicism from the day-to-day announcements dribbled out by the leaders, since the PBO's estimates automatically have more credibility than the parties' war rooms.

But are we having the discussion we need about how much Ottawa taxes and spends? While we learn more about how much these promises will cost, we still know far too little about how they will actually be paid for.

What the PBO doesn't do — nor could he, because his mandate doesn't extend that far — is assess the overall fiscal integrity of each platform. Do the numbers for each party's initiatives all add up to something that Canada can actually afford? The confidence the public can now have at the micro level is not repeated at the macro.

SCOFFIELD continued on A6

Ontario renters hit hardest by housing affordability crisis, national index shows

EMILY MATHIEU
 AFFORDABLE HOUSING REPORTER

Ontario is leading the country in terms of the number of renters spending half or more of their income on housing, and it's a problem that's not confined to urban centres.

That's the takeaway of the Canadian Rental Housing Index, which has unveiled a new rental housing tool its creators hope will make it easier for some voters to decide how they can make a difference at the polls in next

month's federal election.

The index has broken down how much of their overall income Canadians are spending on rent across all 338 federal ridings. Those findings, along with an interactive search tool, were released Tuesday.

Of the 20 ridings with the highest proportion of renters spending 50 per cent or more of their income on housing, 11 are in Ontario, the index shows. Six are in British Columbia and the remaining three are in Manitoba, Nova

Scotia and Quebec.

"Ontario has the worst five ridings for the entire country in terms of housing affordability," said Marlene Coffey, chief executive officer of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, speaking to the media at the YWCA Toronto Elm Centre, at Elm and Elizabeth Sts., on Tuesday morning. She said the province has been "hit harder than anywhere else in the country."

HOUSING continued on A10



Ex-aide plays Trump card

Edward Keenan files his first report from Washington as Lewandowski clams up at congressional hearing A3

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FULL INDEX FOR WEDNESDAY, A2 ONO 7 71412 00003 1

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